



Gods of Mars

Graham McNeill

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Beyond the edges of the galaxy, Archmagos Kotov's great voyage is over. He has achieved his goal - to find the resting place of the long-lost Vettius Telok. But Telok yet lives, and as the brave explorators of Kotov's fleet marvel at the wonders laid before them, darker plans unfold. As reality itself is threatened by impossible technologies from the dawn of time, it falls to a small group of heroes to thwart an insane plan that could see the entire universe annihilated.

This is the final book in the critically acclaimed Adeptus Mechanicus series from Graham McNeill. Discover the fate of the lost voyage of Magos Vettius Telok, and the dark secret that waits far beyond the Imperium at the very edge of the galaxy.

Gods of Mars Details

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From Reader Review Gods of Mars for online ebook

Jared says

Excellent conclusion to the trilogy. Just a tiny bit disappointed that the "workers rights" mini-arc didn't really go anywhere. That said, it was really an excellent read.

David Guymer says

An exceptional end to an exceptional series. I think the word might be 'explosive'. The finale to the OF MARS series is, after some opening moves, essentially all combat and after the slow cranking up of tension of the first two novels it's predictably breathtaking stuff. It's easy to suffer from battle fatigue, but there's no worry of that here as every battle means something to someone and I don't think I could name a single character I didn't care about by the end. Plus there's revelations aplenty to keep the pages and then the chapters turning.

There's been several stand-out characters as the series has gone on. Surcouff was my favourite in PRIESTS, overtaken by Abreham Locke in LORDS, but to my the character that I think is going to stick with me for longest is Tarkis Blaylock. Oh Tarkis. So complicated, so layered. The ending wasn't kind to him, but he's survived worse. I have hope for him. Speranza means Hope, after all.

Andrew Coates says

The trilogy built to a very interesting end- some of the methods and the insights into the mechanics was really interesting. However the ending was a little bit cheesy for my taste, but I may be being a little finicky.

Rob says

Disappointing conclusion to a decent series. The book feels dragged out, like the author ran out of material halfway through. The epilogue was bland and felt tacked on for the sake of setting up future books. Overall, it was an okay read but nowhere near as good as the first two

Chris Broster says

Fantastic read taking me far far beyond my imagination and into the depths of a God...or so he would think! brings in some new characters and styles of writing and unearths a lost race too. Man and Machine working side by side whilst fight this that and the other!

Couldn't put it down.

Bravo Mr McNeil

John says

There is a lot of interesting stuff happening here and overall, I enjoyed the series.

Some criticisms:

- A LOT of over-the-top description of tech-fluff that really just goes nowhere. The author needs to delete the word noospheric from his vocabulary. Since much of the external conflict has a technological focus (as it should be), the whole theme gets oversaturated very quickly. Each confrontation boils down to "This mysterious old technology might counteract that mysterious old technology. Let's check the noosphere."
- I actually liked a lot of the characters, eventually, other than the actual tech priests, but I guess they are supposed to be flat and uninteresting? The space elves were very clichéd and cheesy for the first two books, but props for making them interesting in the last volume. The subplot about the Astartes worked well.
- Really, really clichéd villain. Since he is the focus of this last volume, that's an issue.

Still, there is a crap ton of interesting lore, and enough decent story to make it a worthwhile read between other books.

Final verdict: Much better than some of the generic WH fantasy stuff; not as good as the better Horus Heresy volumes or the Eisenhorn series.

Andy says

This is the third volume of Graham McNeill's Adeptus Mechanicus trilogy and also one of the more complicated and sort of all encompassing WH40K novels I've read. Of note is how most of the plot takes place out of the reach of the Emperor and his perpetual Astronomicon beacon, thus making it kind of a rogue novel in this WH40K galaxy. Many WH40K characters are involved in the battle to stop the long lost Telok from executing his plan of destroying Mars and ultimately the Emperor.

The highlight of the book to me was the various protagonist groups battling the evil spawned Tindalos. Reading this you could sense that many of the good characters in the book were about to perish. This was my first deeper exposure to the Eldar also, and I found them very mysterious and interesting characters. I also got my first real exposure to the Cadian shock troops, very interesting as well.

I am not rating this one as high as past WH40K efforts, due to how (unnecessarily) complex the novel was. It just didn't flow as well, but it was very enjoyable to read and dissect.

Tim says

It seems to me that the whole Warhammer book franchise is now all about taking as much money as possible from its fan base. 30 or so books and counting in the Horus Heresy saga and three books for this story (set long after the heresy).

The story was acceptable in its own right, however I don't think it needed three books to tell it and for me (if we are to put it into the Warhammer universe) it has a major issue.

The characters were not particularly engaging and here was the strange thing. Something must have radically changed in the Warhammer universe, because the Mechanicus who I understood to replace their human parts with machine, seem to be the most emotional or "human" of all the characters in the story; and that's not the only thing.

Space Marines forget about the Eldar killing their leader and seemingly link up with no problems in order to defeat the enemy. I know there have been alliances in the past, but when the whole Space Marine and "God Emperor" is based upon a twisted pseudo faith, would the Marines be so easily swayed to form an alliance? I found this far fetched.

Then we have the descriptions of consciousness flying around cyberspace, in scenes reminiscent of the lawn mower man, the narrative confuses as much as it describes and I'd suggest you'll get lost quickly even if your Warhammer knowledge is great (unless you are a techie)

This should not have been a 3 book set.

My time with the Warhammer universe is coming to an end. I thought the Heresy to have been drawn out overly, but when other titles outside that series are doing the same thing, I've got better things to read and ones that don't stretch themselves into a series for what I can only believe is a way to get even more money from fans.

I have a few books from Warhammer remaining that were bought as presents and added to my reading list. After these then I can't see myself returning to the Warhammer universe any time soon.

Michael Da Silva says

Gods of War closes off what was, in my opinion, the second best Warhammer 40,000 series of all time. Second only to the Eisenhorn trilogy in terms of setting, mood, plot, and overall feel.

It has enough Space Marines to get your bolter porn fix. It has Guardsmen, Titans, Necrons, Eldar, Hrud...

It mixes all of these elements in a believable adventure that was a blast from start to finish. I loved how it took the setting out of the war-torn Imperium and went beyond the edge of the galaxy, where all the rules are gone. Most 40k stuff tends to fall into a very predictable pattern.

Some kind of Chaos is behind everything, and while it can still be fun, it tends to be a little redundant.

Taking these characters literally exploring beyond the edges of the fiction allowed for a tremendous breadth of character and imagination that I felt were very lacking in most Black Library stuff.

The Mechanicus are also humanized in a very interesting way. They are still machines, for the most part, but Graham added hidden layers of depth to their character that allowed them to still be interesting. They spurt angry binary, and interact with machines and each other in a way that makes them fun. Technology is really couched in mysticism here, and is treated almost like magic, or "the Force" in some ways.

And thank the Emperor that there is NO Chaos in any of these books... what a refreshing change.

My only concern for people going into this would be the fact that at some points, especially in this third book in the trilogy, things go full-on 'magic'. There is some psychic and machine trickery that just cannot be explained, and has to be taken at face value. It's a little Deus Ex Machina in some ways, but it was definitely no more intrusive than most of the 'demon' or 'psyker' explanations that fans of the setting are used to.

Highly recommend, and given the very, VERY cliffhanger ending, I wouldn't be surprised if we saw more.

Sud666 says

Gods of Mars was a decent enough story, but it just didn't do it for me. I am not saying that it was bad, it is actually quite decent. Perhaps the fact that this was the third book in a series I had not read was what truly threw me off. I wish they had labeled it "Book Three" or something. I didn't realize till I started reading that there were two other books that had come before.

On top of that, the subject matter- the Adeptus Mechanicus trying to stop an ancient rogue Arch-Magos from destroying reality with a xenos machine, just wasn't all that exciting. They do try- from Galatea, the monstrous AI, to Archmagos Telok, the insane Archmagos who seeks to destroy Mars and Terra, even the motley array of Eldar, Deathwatch Astartes and a Rouge Trader to round of the cast of characters didn't draw me in.

In essence Arhmagos Telok has found an ancient Xenos weapon called the Breath of the Gods. With it he intends to destroy Terra and Mars and set himself up as some new God-Emperor. Trying to stop him is Archmagos Kotov and the previously mentioned grouping of Deathwatch Marines and Eldarin the service of Farseer Bielanna Faerelle who seek to preserve the universe. That is the story. It was good enough, but I never developed any kind of understanding or truly liking any of the characters. Even the Deathwatch Astartes weren't all that exciting. So a good enough story but far from the usual Warhammer story that I enjoy.

Iver says

I'm a big fan of the Warhammer 40K universe and have deeply enjoyed everything I've read from there. But I think this trilogy and this final volume of it is my absolute favorite to date. Epic in scope and utilizing a variety of factions from within the universe (Imperial Guard, Space Marines, Adeptus Mechanicus, Eldar). Plus, it's a Quest story, and I love a good Quest story.

Jody Ellis says

The conclusion to the Mars trilogy by Graham McNeil is a confounding disappointment. Graham draws on concepts that are not his own as he has done throughout this trilogy. Adamantium which is a marvel original, for example. Promethium was an interesting one, and I was conflicted as it's a metal solid that's radioactive but I couldn't find out if it was flammable, so the fact it was set on fire was a fuzzy area for me.

The fact these were either unoriginal or so close to non-warhammer movies and books made before the Mars series really draws into question the rest of the trilogy. How did black library allow this? It tarnishes the whole warhammer image drawing from Marvel etc.

Graham uses a gross amount of fillers that draws the reader off into distraction, entire pages could be wasted and you'd be no further in the story time-line.

It was not an easy read. If it wasn't for the fillers, he could have finished this story in the second book. Instead he risked damaging his credibility with a third. The last fifty of so pages were a saving grace and it got good, the ending was suspected but still managed to draw a gasp from me and a newfound desire to know what happened when they got back to Mars.

To find some more positives, Grahams descriptive language was intimate and luxurious and you were never short of being able to accurately picture a scene. Had Graham have either fit this into the second book, or done half the number of pages I could have given a better rating. I also hope that instead of taking from other fantastic sources such as Marvel, that Graham can find some originality for future publications.

I award three stars for excellent descriptive language albeit it far too much of. Also for a well made conclusion of wonderment and impressive imagination. These books were not easy to write by any means, so commendation is due here.

Callum Shephard says

Following directly on from the bombshells left in the wake of Lords of Mars, the latest novel by McNeill is a very strange tome indeed. On the one hand it's the perfect example of a possible angle for Warhammer 40,000 novels to approach, focusing away from the battlefields in favour of a space opera and ongoing tale of conflicting agendas and secrets. Brighter than the average setting of the universe, more akin to Gotrek and Felix than the Ultramarines series, the Adeptus Mechanicus books are a clear way to break away from the perpetual grimdark style some readers have come to hate. With a plethora of fascinating characters, the rare 40k setting of a true space opera and a wealth of new opportunities, it should be a shining example to all of Black Library. On the other hand, it never seems to truly embrace all of this and many points keep trying to be less Battlestar Galactica and more Star Trek: Into Darkness, often pulling back into familiar territory. This is taken to the next level in Gods of Mars and it badly hurts the series as a result.

Having finally arrived in orbit over the stronghold of the enigmatic Magos Telok, survivor of an ill fated expedition and keeper of the legendary Breath of Gods, the remaining ships of the Explorator fleet lick their wounds. On the world below the Black Templars, Rogue Traders, Mechanicum Adepts and Imperial Guardsmen find a realm of wonders. Telok's creations are far in advance of anything the modern Imperium retains, but the decades of isolation have taken their toll on his mind. Even as the various factions aboard the Speranza deal with internal feuds, one truly realise the true threat which awaits them below...

Those of you who read the previous review of Priests of Mars might recall that one point praised was the restraint when it came to mass violence. While the novel offered a full blown fleet battle and calamitous events of fire and shrapnel, the main drive came down to its characters. Backstabbing, personal ambitions, old grudges and apparent curses were rife throughout, and these allowed the series to remain head and shoulders above the usual bolter porn seen in Black Library. Unfortunately this seems to be forgotten here and Gods of Mars switches things around.

All of a sudden the violence is front and centre, with many personal events being quickly wrapped up or shoved entirely into the background in favour of battles. Several secondary figures are abruptly killed off early on, the Legio Sirius are barely in the book, and many thrilling ideas are suddenly squashed. Chief among these is the ambition and drive of Archmagos Kotov and his compromises to join up with Telok. Throughout prior books we have seen him deal in very shady acts and even outright heresy to chase after Telok, but the book resolves this entire point within a chapter. He just sees the light of his actions and then goes hardline against them, going all-out to stop further heresy and preventing any further drama from this angle. The same goes for a few other characters as well. The conclusion of the previous novel ended with Captain Surcouf and Linya Tychon undergoing severely traumatic events, with one being turned into a potential sleeper agent and the other torn from her body. These really cranked up the wham moments from the end of the book, but they're almost forgotten here. Linya is important but the horror of her situation is subdued to a ridiculous degree and Surcouf's manipulation is all but forgotten.

As this was a part of an ongoing tale, with each book leaning directly into the next one, Gods of Mars itself seems to be treated as a third act. It's more action packed, trying to tie up events and giving many explosions. On this at least it delivers in spades, but it's nothing we've really seen before and the unique and unusual situation of being trapped on a rogue Mechanicus world is something we've seen done before. While Kotov's band is amazed and horrified by what they find, it's nowhere near as well done as similar ideas found in Ben Counter's Dark Mechanicus. To stand out this needed to be the Warhammer version of The Island of Doctor Moreau or give more initial ambiguity to Telok, but McNeill's use of him as a shallow doomsday villain merely robs much of the story of its potential.

All this said though, there was enough here to keep anyone who has seen the story before now reading. Foremost among these was how the story continues to treat machine spirits as something potentially real rather than the mere superstition they are so commonly regarded as, and this is taken to the next level. Further concepts and ideas are added here, which are obviously more spiritual in nature than merely misunderstood technology, and this adds a great deal of variety to the universe. It's worked into the plot's very core, and even as it discards its main strengths this one remains constant throughout.

In addition to this the main battles themselves hold up surprisingly well. While the enemy consists largely of faceless drones without much personality, there are enough hints and discoveries made by Kotov's crew to give them some real interest. Suggestions are made that they might be of necrotyr origin or perhaps even some other creation, but completely unlike anything seen from that race before. There's always slight suggestions here and there which keep them intriguing, the same elements which help the likes of the true necrons and tyranids over other variations. Plus it helps that, even when he's eroded the main foundations of his storyline, McNeill always knows how to stage a huge battle, last stand or major skirmish.

Ultimately Gods of Mars is ridden with many of the same problems Vengeful Spirit was. It needed to have a much clearer focus, less emphasis upon the huge battles and a far better balance throughout its spanning storylines. What we have here is only really excused as the tale itself does not end with this story and there are suggestions the series will keep going onto future installments, hopefully getting back to what was successful prior to this. If you've read Priests and Lords of Mars, the third part of this series will keep you going until the last page, but it lacks many of the strengths of its predecessors. Pick it up if you want to keep going with this story, but keep your expectations firmly grounded.
